

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-02 USIE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OPR-02 DHA-02
MCT-01 CU-02 INRE-00 SIL-01 EB-07 LAB-04 COME-00
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O R 052222Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2636
INFO PANCANAL
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, PBOR, ELAB, PN, PQ
SUBJECT: TREATY NEGOTIATIONS - MEDIA PLAY

REF: PANAMA 4782

SUMMARY: DIRECT MEDIA COVERAGE OF RETURN OF PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATORS WAS RELATIVELY SCANT DURING LONG WEEKEND; PRINCIPAL MEDIA TOPICS WERE PROFESSORS' DEMONSTRATION AT EMBASSY AND PANAMANIAN-CITIZEN CANAL ZONE UNION OPPOSITION TO DIRECTION OF TREATY LABOR DISCUSSIONS. THERE HAS BEEN A MARKED UPTURN IN ANALYTICAL PIECES IN LOCAL PRESS, MANY BY SPOKESMEN OF "PURE NATIONALIST" OPPOSITION. OFFICIAL GOP STATEMENTS, BOTH ATTRIBUTED AND OTHERWISE, HAVE REPEATED LAST WEEK'S "PRUDENCE AND CAUTION" THEME. BUT IT APPEARS TO US THAT ABSENT A DEFINITIVE GOP PUBLIC LINE, BOTH MEDIA AND OPPOSITION ARE BEGINNING TO GIRD THEIR LOINS IN ANTICIPATION OF A WIDESPREAD PUBLIC DEBATE ON A DRAFT TREATY. END SUMMARY.

1. DIRECT COVERAGE OF RETURN OF PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATING TEAM
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WAS RELATIVELY RESTRAINED OVER THE LONG WEEKEND. TELEVISION NEWSCASTS CARRIED NONCOMMITTAL ITEMS SATURDAY EVENING, JULY 2 (FBIS/PANAMA PA 020055Y), AND SUNDAY NEWSPAPERS REPEATED LOW-KEY PLAY. THEMES OF ARTICLES WERE THAT ECONOMIC ISSUE WAS PRINCIPAL REMAINING DIVISIVE POINT; THEY DID NOT MINIMIZE DEPTH OF THE DIVISION. AN UNIDENTIFIED PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATOR IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT EVEN THOUGH 80 PERCENT

OF THE WORK MAY HAVE BEEN COMPLETED, FAILURE ON THE LAST 20 PERCENT WOULD MEAN THE WHOLE JOB WAS UNDONE. "DOMINICAL" ON JULY 3 EDITORIALY REPEATED FRIDAY'S GOP STATEMENT THAT OPTIMISM AMONG US CIRCLES IN WASHINGTON SHOULD BE RECEIVED WITH "PRUDENCE AND CAUTION" IN PANAMA UNTIL FULL AGREEMENT IS REACHED.

2. ALONG WITH ANNOUNCEMENT OF PANAMANIAN TEAM'S RETURN AND MEETING JULY 3 AND 4 WITH TORRIJOS (FBIS/PANAMA PA 041330Y), MEDIA CONTINUED THROUGH MONDAY TO REPEAT THAT ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL SOURCES, NATIONAL GUARD LTC ARMANDO CONTRERAS, ACCOMPANIED BY PANAMA'S LANDS AND WATERS TECHNICAL TEAM, WOULD DEPART ON JULY 4 TO CONTINUE TECHNICAL TALKS IN WASHINGTON ON DEFENSE ASPECTS OF TREATY (FBIS/PANAMA PA 030127Y, PA 012220Y). FYI: AS OF MONDAY EVENING, CIVILIANS ON PANAMANIAN TECHNICAL TEAM WERE STILL IN PANAMA AWAITING WORD TO GO TO WASHINGTON AND RESUME MEETING. WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER CONTRERAS LEFT, BUT BELIEVE HE DID NOT. END FYI.

3. MAIN COLLATERAL TOPIC IN MEDIA WAS JULY 4 DEMONSTRATION AT EMBASSY BY A GROUP OF UNIVERSITY AND HIGH SCHOOL PROFESSORS (REFTEL), ONE OF THE BEST-ANNOUNCED AND -COVERED DEMONSTRATIONS RECENTLY. SATURDAY AND SUNDAY PAPERS PRINTED THE PROFESSORS' DECLARATION AND ANNOUNCED THEIR PLANNED DEMONSTRATION, "CRITICA" HAILED IT EDITORIALY MONDAY AND TUESDAY, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND ALL PAPTERS PRINTED FURTHER COVERAGE WITH PICTURES ON TUESDAY, JULY 5. (WITH ITS USUAL WASPISHNESS, "CRITICA" GOSSIP COLUMN "DESDE EL CAFETIN" NOTED THAT COLUMNIST AND VICE-DEAN OF LAW SCHOOL CAMILO PEREZ HAD PICKETED U.S. EMBASSY MONDAY MORNING, AND THEN ATTENDED A RECEPTION AT RESIDENCE THAT EVENING.)

4. SECOND COLLATERAL TOPIC IS REJECTION OF DIRECTION OF TREATY LABOR ASPECTS BY CANAL ZONE LOCALS OF AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES (AFSCME). IN A BYLINED WEEKLY COLUMN IN ENGLISH SECTION OF "REPUBLICA" JULY 1, AFSCME REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAM SINCLAIR RECALLS LONG HISTORY OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PANAMANIAN EMPLOYEES IN CANAL ZONE PRIOR TO 1955 TREATY. HE EXPLICITLY REJECTS "STATE X DEPARTMENT" CONCEPT THAT USG EXERCISE "TOTAL CONTROL" OVER EMPLOYEE RELATIONS UNDER NEW TREATY, CALLING INSTEAD FOR A BINATIONAL COMMITMENT RELATING TO WAGES, BENEFITS AND WORKING CONDITIONS WHICH UNIONS COULD CONTINUE TO USE, AS THEY HAVE USED REMON-EISENHOWER TREATY, AS A TOUCH-STONE IN EFFORT TO IMPROVE SITUATION OF THEIR MEMBERS. (COPY POUCHED ARA/PAN - CAMAUR.) ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN NO COMMENT, SINCLAIR'S COLUMN WAS REPRINTED ON

FRONT PAGE OF "MATUTINO" JULY 2, AND EXTENSIVELY
QUOTED IN A "CRITICA" FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE JULY 5. SUCH
EXTENSIVE REPLAY OF SINCLAIR'S WEEKLY COLUMNS IS HIGHLY
UNUSUAL.

5. ANOTHER NOTABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PAST FEW DAYS HAS BEEN A
RESURGENCE OF ANALYTICAL ARTICLES ON VARIOUS
ASPECTS OF TREATY ISSUE BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL SPOKESMEN
AND PARTICULARLY BY SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE "PURE
NATIONALIST" (I.E., NON-LEFT) OPPOSITION. SUCH
ARTICLES WERE NO UNCOMMON A YEAR OR MORE AGO, BUT
MORE RECENTLY DRIBBLED OFF TO NOTHING. THE FIRST IN
RECENT MONTHS WAS AN ARTICLE IN MARCH BY CARLOS
PEDRESCHI ATTACKING THE US "STRATEGY OF THE IMMINENT
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TREATY" (PANAMA 2314). PEDRESCHI HAS SINCE PUBLISHED
TWO MORE, THE MOST RECENT APPEARING IN JULY 3
"ESTRELLA". THIS ANALYZED "ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES"
AVAILABLE TO PANAMA, AND CONCLUDED THAT PANAMA'S CAUSE
WAS BETTER SERVED BY WAITING AT THIS JUNCTURE THAN BY
PRESSING ON TO A TREATY. "ESTRELLA" FOR JULY 1 PRINTED
TWO LONG ARTICLES, ONE BY OPPOSITION LAWYER DIOGENES
AROSEMENA ANALYZING "NEUTRALITY" VERSUS "NEUTRALIZATION"
OF CANAL (FBIS/PANAMA PA 021509Y), AND A SECOND BY
RICARDO ALFARO WHICH ATTACKED CONTINUATION OF "ZONIAN"
PRIVILEGE.

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NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OPR-02 DHA-02
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TRSE-00 AID-05 ARAE-00 /080 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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6. EDUARDO VALDES, FREQUENT COLUMNIST IN SEVERAL LOCAL PAPERS, APPEARED IN "MATUTINO" FOR JULY 2 AND "ESTRELLA" FOR JULY 3 ON STRATEGY PANAMA SHOULD ADOPT--THAT OF PRESENTING ITSELF AS AN INJURED PARTY SEEKING JUST REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES--TO AMELIORATE US CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION TO RATIFICATION. REGULAR "MATUTINO" COLUMNIST RICARDO LINCE ON JULY 2 CALLED FOR PRESS "TO FULFULL THE DELICATE MISSION OF BECOMING AN INFORMATION VEHICLE FOR THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE...AND ALSO...DEMOCRATICALLY OPENING THE WAY TO OPINIONS, FAVORABLE VIEWS, CRITICISMS, POLLS AND AN OPEN REVIEW OF THESE MATTERS." (FBIS/PANAMA PA 021818Y.)

7. COMMENT: FROM THIS MEDIA COVERAGE, WE OBSERVE NOT THE PRESENCE OF ANY DEFINABLE GOP "LINE" ON THE CURRENT NEGOTIATING SITUATION, BUT RATHER THE CONTINUED ABSENCE OF ONE. OFFICIAL STATEMENTS, ATTRIBUTED AND OTHERWISE, AND NOW-INFREQUENT NATIONAL INFORMATION COMMISSION COMMUNIQUE HAVE SOUGHT DOWNPLAY--BUT NOT TO CLEARLY REFUTE--THE AIR OF OPTIMISM AND EXPECTANCY THAT
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WASHINGTON-ORIGIN STORIES PRODUCE THESE DAYS. ALTHOUGH NOT DIMINISHING THE IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENCES REMAINING, PARTICULARLY IN THE ECONOMIC AREA, THE GOP IS NOT REBUTTING, BUT RATHER SOFTENING, THE OPTIMISM COMING SOUTH.

8. IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY UNMISTAKABLE GOP SIGNAL TO THE CONTRARY, HOWEVER, THE VIEW FROM WASHINGTON THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE ENTERING THE LAST LAP IN PENETRATING PANAMANIAN NON-GOVERNMENTAL CIRCLES. THE "PURE NATIONALISTS", THE SELF-IDENTIFIED "INDEPENDENTS" AND THE GOVERNMENT'S OWN COLUMNISTS ARE PUBLISHING ON THE ISSUES AS IF THEY FULLY EXPECT TO HAVE A DRAFT TREATY TO DEAL WITH IN VERY SHORT ORDER. THE JULY 5 PRESS REPORTS THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION READY FOR A TREATY PLEBISCITE ANY TIME AFTER AUGUST 31. THE TREND OF THE COMMENTARY SO FAR IS UNSURPRISING--THE GENERAL THRUST OF "PURE NATIONALIST" THOUGHT HAS BEEN NO SECRET, AND THEIR ULTIMATE OPPOSITION TO MANY ASPECTS OF A TORRIJOS GOVERNMENT TREATY CAN SAFELY BE RESUMED.

JORDEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AGREEMENTS, PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS, NEGOTIATIONS, CANALS, ANTIAMERICAN FEELING
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Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Message ID: d2195171-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 PANAMA 4782
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1966070
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TREATY NEGOTIATIONS - MEDIA PLAY
TAGS: SOPN, PBOR, ELAB, EWWT, PN, PQ, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d2195171-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009